



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on September 28, 2023

Republicans Debate Each Other and “Moderators”

Seven Republicans showed up for the Republican presidential debate Wednesday night at the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California, and had a spirited debate with each other over the issues and which of them is the best choice for the Republican nomination. But they also had to debate *the moderators* from Fox Business, who appeared to believe their job was to represent the *Democratic Party*.

The seven Republicans were North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former South Carolina Governor (and former UN ambassador) Nikki Haley, former Vice President Mike Pence, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, and Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina.



AP Images

Mentioned during the debate was the Republican front-runner, former President Donald Trump, who was not present. Both Christie and DeSantis challenged Trump to participate in debates. But DeSantis was not as forceful in his remarks about Trump as was Christie, who said the only Republican who should be “voted off the island” of future debates is Trump. Christie’s caustic remark was in response to “moderator” Dana Perino’s question near the end of the debate, in which she noted that Trump would be much more likely to win the nomination if all seven candidates stayed in the race. Following up on that premise, Perino (a former aide to former President George W. Bush) instructed the candidates to take a piece of paper and write down the names of those on the stage who should be “voted off the island.”

To his credit, DeSantis retorted, “with all due respect, that is very insulting.”

But it was typical of the night, as the moderators strove to exacerbate friction among the hopefuls. Perino even asked Haley and Scott to describe why she or he would be better than the other candidate to be the nominee. When DeSantis noted that he was the only candidate who had served in the military, Perino interjected that Haley’s husband was serving. This is much like a football official throwing a block for one of the teams so they could score a touchdown.

Of course, the candidates often needed no prodding to attack each other, and they did so often. While the candidates expressed general agreement on most of the issues that were introduced by the debate moderators, perhaps the biggest point of difference was on the question of military aid to Ukraine in their war with Russia. Haley, Pence, and Scott were clearly in favor of giving military aid to Ukraine, while DeSantis and Ramaswamy expressed opposition. DeSantis said, “We will not have a blank check for Ukraine,” adding that his chief aim was to defend American national sovereignty. Ramaswamy went even further, noting that just because Russia’s government is bad does not mean that Ukraine’s is good. Christie countered that Putin won’t stop with Ukraine, and that Poland will be next. (It is hard to



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imagine that Russia will be invading anyone after the trouble it has encountered in Ukraine). Scott made the case that aid to Ukraine was important to America because it degrades the Russian military, and will keep them from invading any NATO country, which would activate Article V of the NATO treaty. (Article V is the commitment of NATO nations to come to each other's aid should any be invaded by the Soviet Union. Of course, the Soviet Union no longer exists, and Article V also states that any intervention by any NATO country under the treaty would still be subject to that nation's laws, and in the United States, that would require an act of Congress.)

One point of agreement between Scott and Ramaswamy was on the meaning of the 14th Amendment. This discussion was in response to another moderator — from Noticia Univision — who appeared to ask every question from the viewpoint of either how “Latinos” were affected or how the Left looks at the issues (or both). In response to a question that assumed the 14th Amendment granted “birthright citizenship” to any person born on the soil of the United States, whether here legally or illegally, Scott and Ramaswamy both said only those here legally were citizens at birth, noting that the 14th Amendment said the person must be born “under the jurisdiction of the United States.” Scott argued that the amendment was about making citizens out of former slaves, not foreigners in the country illegally.

Scott said of American blacks, “We have overcome slavery,” adding that black families have survived slavery and discrimination, but in recent years it is the “Great Society” programs of Lyndon Johnson that have done the most damage to the black family by “taking the father out of the home.” He said, “America is not a racist country.”

Another issue that seemed to unite the candidates was opposition to transgender surgeries for minors. Ramaswamy said transgenderism was a mental health disorder and that it is not compassionate to affirm a child's confusion. “It is barbaric.” Pence chimed in that although schools will not even hand out an aspirin without parental permission, they will argue that parents should not even know about their child's desire for transgender surgery.

The candidates also seemed united in opposition to the energy and climate policies of the Biden administration, with Burgum arguing that it is Biden's climate policies, not climate change, that is our major problem.

One issue that made Ramaswamy stand out was his criticism of the Federal Reserve System, which he called a “rogue” agency of the federal government. He vowed to put the Fed “in its place,” but, unfortunately, no one followed up on that statement to learn exactly what he meant.

The night concluded with Ramaswamy praising the record of former President Trump, but emphasizing that the “America First agenda does not belong to one man.”



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